

The Commissioner's REPORT

New Jersey
Transportation
Highlights

Governor
James E. McGreevey

October 2002

Commissioner
Jamie Fox

Governor McGreevey has asked me to implement his vision of a Department that is efficient and committed to smart growth. Communicating with the citizens of New Jersey on a regular basis is an integral part of sharing this vision. The Commissioner's Report, a monthly newsletter, highlights the Department's pledge to serve the transportation needs in your communities and throughout the state. New Jerseyans deserve a better quality of life, ensured by an effective transportation network. I hope this newsletter is helpful to you.

— Commissioner Jamie Fox

News briefs

NJDOT gives communities funds to upgrade town centers, improve safety, enhance quality of life

See page 2

\$1 billion worth of construction is under way in state

See page 3

Efforts continue to improve cost and efficiency of E-ZPass

See page 3

New mass transit services make life easier for New Jersey commuters

See page 4

Helpful Numbers

See page 2



Light rail comes to Hoboken

The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail's (HBLR) Hoboken Terminal officially opened on October 2. Governor James E. McGreevey and Transportation Commissioner and NJ TRANSIT Board Chairman Jamie Fox joined Senator Jon Corzine, Representative Bob Menendez, NJ TRANSIT Executive Director George Warrington and Hoboken Mayor David Roberts at the ceremony. The HBLR was launched in April 2000 and now operates in Bayonne, Jersey City and Hoboken.

NJDOT gives communities funds to upgrade town centers, improve safety, enhance quality of life

When people think about the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), they usually think about roads, bridges and mass transit. While these are all critical to the economy, direct investments in communities are equally important.

The best way to invest in communities is to provide a direct infusion of funds for local projects that spur economic growth, enhance quality of life and also preserve a community's character.

NJDOT awards significant grant money to local communities for such projects as revitalizing downtown areas, improving pedestrian safety by enhancing crosswalks, building sidewalks near schools, constructing hiking trails, creating bikeways and restoring historic structures.

In FY2002, the Department's Local Aid program distributed roughly \$313 million. This amount included over \$67 million for Municipal Aid, over \$67 million for County Aid and \$14 million for Transportation Enhancements.

This funding meant tangible results for New Jersey communities. For example, \$145,000 was granted to restore Brown Street in Flemington; \$300,000 to overhaul the Main Street Pedestrian Crosswalk in Freehold and \$500,000 for the Downtown Transit & Historic Center in Paterson. These are just a sampling of the variety of local projects funded by NJDOT across the state.

In addition to revitalizing downtown centers, the Local Aid program places a premium on enhancing the quality of life in communities through the creation of hiking trails and bikeways in natural and scenic areas. For example, the federally funded Transportation Enhancement Program recently awarded \$500,000 for



NJDOT funded the renovations of the walkway and pier at Castle Point in Hoboken, a part of the Hudson River Walkway project.

recreational hiking trails in Sussex County.

The Enhancement Grant program allows NJDOT to fund non-traditional transportation projects that add to the quality of life for New Jersey residents. It is important that communities capitalize on the federal transportation funds available for projects of this nature.

A full list of these projects can be found on <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/lgs/fy2002allotments.htm>

Helpful Numbers

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\$1 billion worth of construction is under way in state

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has awarded 71 construction contracts worth \$325 million since January. By the end of the year, the Department expects to award an additional \$235 million, a 42 percent increase from last year.

The NJDOT is reviewing ways to expedite the advance of new projects from initial study stages to actual construction.

Even with a current capital budget of \$2.5 billion, the state faces an additional \$2.5 billion deficit to fix its aging bridges over the next five years. New Jersey's mass transit system, especially in the wake of last year's terrorist attacks, requires hundreds of millions of dollars in new equipment and infrastructure. Highways are already congested and the state's population continues to grow.

The NJDOT is learning to do more with less and find new ways to fix a transportation system in need of repair. The state's innovative effort to fund the repairs to the aging Driscoll Bridge that carries the Garden State Parkway over the Raritan River underscores this approach. The bridge carries more than a quarter of a million cars daily and is the source of chronic congestion. The financing plan involves utilizing funds from the Parkway, as well as the New Jersey Turnpike. As a result, a contract has been awarded and construction is expected to start in the spring.

Innovation and planning will play a crucial role as the NJDOT advances other congestion-relief initiatives, including the reconstruction of the junction of I-295, I-76 and Routes 42 and 55 in Camden and Gloucester counties. As the Department plans its budget, it will continue a "Fix-it-First" approach with a renewed emphasis on coordination between all transportation authorities.

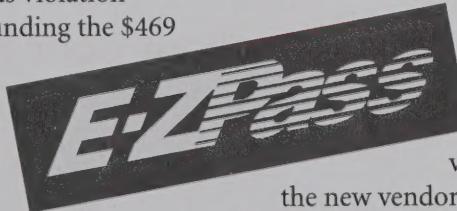
UPDATE: GETTING E-ZPASS BACK ON TRACK

Efforts continue to improve E-ZPass cost and efficiency

In July Governor McGreevey announced a new plan for improving the performance and efficiency of E-ZPass. The focus of this effort is on reducing bogus violation notices, improving customer service and funding the \$469 million deficit that the Administration inherited.

Since that announcement significant progress has been made. ACS State and Local Solutions, the nation's premier electronic toll system vendor, has been hired. They have already begun to remedy equipment failures in the lanes and to institute new customer service enhancements.

Every month more than 270,000 bogus violations were being mailed to legitimate E-ZPass customers. Not only



Route 31 project to ease congestion

Heavy equipment is going full steam on the long-awaited improvements along Route 31 in Readington and Raritan townships near Flemington in Hunterdon County. When completed at the end of 2003, drivers will no longer be plagued by the bottlenecks that occur on this heavily traveled highway.

was this exceedingly frustrating for customers, it was costing the state millions of dollars. In fact,

New Jersey spent \$17 million more to collect fees than it received in fines. This simply wasn't smart business and in July and August a moratorium on the issuance of violation notices was instituted while the new vendor began to fix the system.

Each month 35,000 new customers join E-ZPass and we are optimistic that as confidence in the system is restored that more individuals will join. Over the next few months, additional reforms will be instituted including the announcement of a plan to bring High Speed E-ZPass to the Garden State Parkway.

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New mass transit services make life easier for New Jersey commuters **NJ TRANSIT launches new MidTOWN DIRECT service**

On September 30 Governor Jim McGreevey and I announced the opening of a MidTOWN DIRECT service on the Montclair-Boonton Line. The new Montclair Connection will save half an hour each day for more than 4,000 NJ TRANSIT customers by providing a direct access to Manhattan during peak and off-peak hours.

This service benefits more than just NJ TRANSIT riders. MidTOWN DIRECT will also reduce congestion on roads leading into New York City by an estimated 1,000 cars a day. The opening of the Montclair Connection highlights our efforts to provide a mass transit system that is convenient and efficient.

New Jersey commuters enjoy new East Concourse at NY Penn Station

With the opening of the 7th Avenue East End Concourse in Manhattan, NJ TRANSIT has a new home in New York Penn Station.

As of Monday, September 23, 2002, the 60,000 New Jersey customers passing through New York Penn Station will have their own waiting area, ticket windows and platform announcement board.

The opening of the East End Concourse alleviates

the chaos of the former location in New York Penn Station for our customers while providing the quality of service mass transit requires.

If we want people to leave their cars at home, we must make it a welcome option. This attractive and convenient new concourse demonstrates our commitment to achieving that goal.